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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 26 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev ..... (Azerbaijan)

Contents

Agenda item 27: Assistance in mine action

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Assistance in mine action

1. **Ms. Lute** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations), reviewing the developments in mine action, since the previous year's report of the Secretary-General (A/59/284 and Add.1), said that the mine action sector, having codified the best industry-wide practices in the International Mine Action Standards, was continuously improving the gathering and analysis of information through the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). As United Nations action had grown in scope, the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had taken a leading role in articulating the essential issues and coordinating the roles and responsibilities of each of the 14 agencies and departments that comprised the United Nations mine action team. A recently published document on the United Nations inter-agency policy entitled "Mine Action and Effective Coordination: the UN inter-agency policy" gave a picture of the Organization's work in the areas of coordination, resource mobilization, local capacity development and institutional support, information management, the training of personnel and quality management, in each of the five basic areas of mine action.

2. In the area of coordination, inter-agency assessment missions to Senegal and Uganda had led both countries to set up programmes to deal with the landmine problem coherently.

3. In the area of clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war, the United Nations had bolstered its support to Member States for technical surveying, mapping, marking, clearance, post-clearance documentation, community liaison and the handover of cleared land. In Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Ethiopia/Eritrea security zone, southern Lebanon and Sudan, mine action was an integral component of the comprehensive peace agreements and was part of the United Nations peace operations. In the case of Cyprus, cooperative mine action was actually contributing to peacebuilding between the two sides. Together with its implementing partners, the United Nations was now working in an environment where more mines came out of the ground than were planted each year.

4. As the lead agency in Colombia, the only nation in Latin America where mines were still being sown, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was putting the main emphasis on mine risk education. In Nepal where improvised explosive devices presented the main threat, it was working closely with the inter-agency framework for mine action planning and rapid response. In Sudan, the peacekeeping mission's mine risk education activities were helping the local and displaced populations to avoid accidents as they returned to their homes.

5. In the area of victim assistance, the aim had been to increase resources dedicated to the physical, socio-economic, educational and vocational training needs of survivors and their families. The portfolio of mine action projects for 2006, which would be published the following month, showed a significant increase in the number of victim assistance projects that addressed the entire cycle from emergency first aid to social reintegration. Most recently, the Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, with the support of the United Nations Office of Project Services, had — together with the national mine action authorities in northern and southern Sudan — put together a joint victim-assistance programme for those areas. That innovative approach had attracted significant funds from a new source, the Human Security Trust Fund. The United Nations mine action team also supported the development of an international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

6. In the area of stockpile destruction, the number of stockpiled anti-personnel landmines continued to decline, while in the area of outreach and advocacy a United Nations inter-agency communications strategy had been developed and was being implemented. The Mine Action Service had developed public service announcements that were broadcast by networks around the world and on the Electronic Mine Information Network (E-MINE), raising awareness of the humanitarian and development impact of mines and directing viewers to websites where they could contribute to efforts to address the problem. Moreover, high-level missions had been deployed to a number of countries to urge adherence to the treaties that formed the normative basis for mine action.

7. **Mr. Lake** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked what progress had been made in achieving the objectives of the United Nations

mine action strategy for 2001-2005, what lessons had been learned and what were considered to be the remaining challenges and priorities.

8. Secondly, he asked whether the gender guidelines, which were to have been field tested, had proved to need further development and when a progress report on them would be ready.

9. **Mr. Flanagan** (Mine Action Service, Department of Peacekeeping Operations) reviewed several notable achievements over the past five years under each of the six strategic goals of the United Nations mine action strategy.

10. Under goal 1 relating to information, the Mine Action Service had completely recast its website and the fact that 5,000 users visited it weekly indicated that it was an important repository of information. Also, an inter-agency communications strategy was now being implemented in many countries, to coordinate and improve outreach. The latest version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), developed in conjunction with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, would soon be operational in more than 40 countries. Two more inter-agency assessment missions were planned for 2005, to Ukraine and Colombia.

11. Under goal 2 relating to effective mine action in United Nations-managed programmes and planning processes, the United Nations Mine Action Service had developed a framework for mine action planning and rapid response the aim of which was to have personnel on the ground and operational within 14 days of a Security Council resolution authorizing a peace operation. It had proved successful in Iraq in 2003 and had been reviewed and evaluated in 2004. In addition to the mine action programmes established as integral components of peacekeeping missions, the Service was now the focal point for the protection cluster within the humanitarian response initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; that required much inter-agency cooperation.

12. Under goal 3 relating to effective planning, coordination and implementation of national and local mine action programmes, 15 impact-based surveys had been completed or were under way in various countries. As part of the preparations for the Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World, the United Nations had helped to develop 20 national plans that gave priority to surveying, clearance, and mine risk education obligations under international treaties. Also, over 400 national staff from more than 20 mine-affected countries had received management training.

13. Under goal 4 regarding the highest attainable standard of implementation of mine action operations, the International Mine Action Standards were continuously reviewed for relevance by a Review Board comprising all members of the mine action sector — non-governmental organizations, government bodies and authorities, donors, commercial companies, and independent military and civilian specialists — and, as funds permitted, the Standards were being translated. Gender guidelines had been adopted. The United Nations had also worked actively with countries developing new technologies to meet the requirements of mine action operators in the field, who were themselves working closely with research and development agencies.

14. Under goal 5 regarding the mobilization and coordinated use of mine action resources, the annual portfolio of mine action projects now covered 35 countries, global projects and territories, and was electronically updated every three months. The portfolio process was in most cases led by national authorities, and in a number of countries was fully coordinated with the consolidated appeals process.

15. Under goal 6 on compliance with international instruments, the mine action team was participating actively in the work programme relating to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and in the deliberations under the Convention on Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects and it was working to obtain commitments from non-State actors to adhere to current international norms and halt the use of mines and other explosive devices.

16. The vast majority of the 48 objectives initially set under the six goals had already been achieved, and a full review of progress since 2001 was under way, as an action-oriented strategy for 2006-2010 was being developed. The focus would be on technical advances that would increase the effectiveness of operational activities. Other challenges included the mobilization of resources, especially alternative funding sources; the identification of countries with mine problems that

could be resolved in a period of three to five years with relatively modest sums of money, the furtherance of effective national oversight and operational capacities, which was a major priority, and the development of exit and transition strategies to shift the responsibility to national authorities. Throughout, the United Nations structures would be reviewed for cost efficiency.

17. **Ms. Kohn** (Mine Action Service, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), replying to the United Kingdom's second question, said that the gender guidelines had been issued in January 2005 to ensure that all United Nations mine action personnel in the field and at Headquarters considered the impact of gender in their work. The guidelines suggested points in a programme where gender considerations should be borne in mind or where it might be possible to achieve gender balance. In February 2005, a small mission had been sent to work with the Afghanistan mine action programme to test the guidelines and discuss gender mainstreaming with personnel familiar with the concept. As a result of that pilot mission, on which a report would soon be issued, a number of steps had been taken. A focal point who would regularly raise the gender issue had been designated within all programmes managed or supported by the United Nations and gender mainstreaming was applied early on in any programme so as to avoid missing opportunities. The Mine Action Service was reviewing all guidance and training documents used in the field, for the guidelines must not remain just a separate document on gender. A university had been commissioned to produce training materials as tools for mine action workers, and their use would be suggested to national authorities and non-governmental organizations. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping had brought the importance of the issue to the attention of all special representatives of the Secretary-General in the field; UNDP and UNICEF had done the same with their own country teams.

18. The guidelines themselves had not required revision, but they did need implementation. As they began to be applied, the mine action team was taking a focused and coordinated approach to the monitoring of the impact of gender-mainstreaming in all United Nations programmes.

19. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that a national mine action strategy had been implemented in his country in 1993. Its goals were to decrease the risk of death or injury from landmine accidents and to rehabilitate the demined areas in order to alleviate poverty and promote development for local communities. It had been announced in April 2003 that all stockpiles of anti-personnel mines had been destroyed. As of mid-2004, over one third of landmines had been removed from Jordanian territory, and the aim was for the country to be free of mines by 2009. His Government was committed to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines as a successful international forum and framework for mine action.

20. The National Committee for De-mining and Rehabilitation was the organ responsible for integrating all aspects of mine action and worked closely with the Royal Corps of Engineers, which was the sole demining operator in the country, although it was possible that a major foreign non-governmental organization would be invited to assist in meeting the 2009 deadline. Consideration could then be given to sharing the experience acquired by establishing a regional mine action training centre in the country and by expanding support for peacekeeping operations outside the country.

21. His country's key strategic objectives for the period 2005 to 2009 included a modified landmine impact survey the aim of which would be to obtain data on progress towards the 2009 deadline and to assess the human impact of mine action and its effect on development. It would be backed by a mobilization strategy. Funds must be raised so that it would be possible to continue providing assistance to victims and survivors beyond 2009, and to extend the campaign for mine risk education, which had begun in 2004 and targeted over 2.8 million Jordanians through the formal education system, the media and local communities. His Government was grateful to the international community for the support it had received to date for its work in demining. The projected budgets for 2005-2009 showed that more funding was sorely needed to meet the objectives.

22. His Government was considering hosting a regional conference in 2006 to discuss both the Ottawa Convention and the national strategic plan on mine action.

23. **Mr. Hunger** (Switzerland) said that living conditions for populations most affected by mines had improved significantly since the Ottawa Convention on Landmines and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons had become binding

instruments. Unfortunately over 40 States had not yet committed themselves to the ban on anti-personnel mines, and several countries and many non-State actors continued to produce and sell such mines.

24. The Mine Action Service had an important role to play as the focal point within the United Nations for action against personnel mines. Clear roles and responsibilities and coordination mechanisms were vital if the international community was to be able to take effective action against mines and explosive remnants of war all over the world.

25. His country's term as Chairman of the Mine Action Support Group, a group consisting of the main donor countries which met informally once a month to discuss mine action policies, was coming to an end after nearly two years. During that period, a dialogue between the members of the group and the United Nations had been promoted and specific examples of the positive role of mine action in the peace process had been considered. Mine action was often one of the first subjects on which conflicting parties could agree, and thus build confidence. The Mine Action Guidelines for Ceasefire and Peace Agreements were most useful in that context.

26. His Government was contributing some $12 million a year to mine action, and planned to finance demining projects, risk education projects, and assistance to the victims and advocates of mine action during the period 2004 to 2007. One of its principal commitments was in the form of support to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The Centre provided operational assistance to mine-affected countries, carried out research and provided instruments and support services to mine action programmes, such as the Information Management System for Mine Action and the International Mine Action Standards, as well as various field manuals. A post had been established at the Centre to assist Member States in implementing the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, and the mine action community was invited to make maximum use of the Centre's expertise and the infrastructure available in Geneva.

27. In 2006 and 2007 Switzerland and Afghanistan would co-chair the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration. His Government would seek to adopt a regional approach in that work and to highlight the role of mine action in the peace process and in development. He hoped that a resolution would be adopted at the current session on assistance to mine action, in order to raise public awareness and strengthen cooperation in the area.

28. **Mr. Li** Junhua (China) said that his Government attached great importance to the humanitarian problems caused by landmines. It supported the efforts of the international community to resolve the concerns of the countries affected, and had participated in international cooperation and assistance and demining efforts.

29. Since its accession in 1998 to the Protocol to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, his country had complied strictly with its provisions through publicity and education and a comprehensive survey of old and obsolete landmines; those which were not consistent with those provisions had been revamped and destroyed in batches and stages. To date some 500,000 old and obsolete mines had been destroyed. Two large-scale demining actions had been conducted in the border regions, and landmines within Chinese territory had been removed.

30. His Government respected and commended the position of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines which had chosen to resolve humanitarian concerns by adopting a comprehensive ban on landmines. For objective reasons it was currently difficult for China and other countries with similar national conditions to accede to that Convention. However, it agreed with the purposes and objectives of the Convention and made every practical and feasible effort to resolve the humanitarian problems caused by landmines. His country attached great importance to increasing exchanges and cooperation with the States Parties to the Convention, it had frequently participated in meetings as an observer and was giving positive consideration to sending an observer delegation to the forthcoming Sixth Review Conference of the Convention in Croatia.

31. Since 1998, China had assisted some 10 Asian and African countries by sponsoring symposia, donating clearing equipment and sending experts to train demining personnel. China had joined the Mine Action Support Group in 2003. Together with the Australian chapter of the International Campaign to

Ban Landmines, it had organized an international symposium on humanitarian demining techniques and cooperation in Kunming, China, in 2004. A programme of mine-clearing assistance to Thailand had been launched in September 2005.

32. **Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) emphasized the need to intensify international cooperation in mine actions. Landmines and unexploded ordnance still threatened people and retarded development in many countries; that issue constituted one of the many serious obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the eradication of poverty.

33. His own country was one of those most seriously affected by unexploded ordnance. It was a small country with an area of 238,000 square kilometres on which over 2 million tons of bombs had been dropped during the Indochina war. The most intensive bombing had taken place between 1964 and 1973, and although the war had ended over 30 years earlier, 15 out of the 18 provinces were still seriously contaminated by unexploded ordnance.

34. In 1996 the Government had set up the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme, known as UXO Lao, in order to reduce the number of civilian casualties, and to increase the amount of land available for food production and development. That programme was currently fully operational in 9 of the 15 contaminated provinces and was implementing the national strategic 10-year plan introduced in 2003. The plan had three priorities: to conduct clearance of agricultural areas and increase public awareness; to enhance grazing land and forested and communal areas; and to promote tourism and private business and commercial sites. In 2004, the programme's area clearance teams had destroyed over 25,300 items of unexploded ordnance and cleared over 1,255 hectares of land, while roving teams had destroyed over 50,200 such items. Community awareness teams had made 495 visits to contaminated villages and educated some 125,000 people nationwide about the dangers of unexploded ordnance.

35. He was grateful to the international community for the technical and financial support his country had received and hoped fervently that its financial support of the UXO Lao programme would continue.

36. **Mr. Shutenko** (Ukraine) said that the prohibition of the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines could be ensured if as many States as possible acceded to amended Protocol II on mines and other devices and Protocol V on explosive remnants of war to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons. The Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction should be applied universally. The Mine Action Service played a key role in policymaking, coordination and advocacy, and the Organization was open to Member States' suggestions on the coordination, integration and scope of mine action. Short-, medium- and long-term priorities should be established under national mine action strategies. National capacities should be built and assistance should be based on the needs of the mine-affected community. In countries where the presence of mines was an obstacle to post-conflict reconstruction, additional technical and financial assistance was necessary for mine clearance, stockpile destruction and the disposal of unexploded ordnance. Operational mine clearance should not eclipse other aspects of mine action, such as assistance to victims. The timely mobilization of donor resources was therefore essential. A recent United Nations mission to Ukraine, which was still experiencing the consequences of the uncontrolled use of mines during the Second World War, had identified requirements for assistance by the United Nations, other international institutions and the donor community. His country's advanced demining technology and logistic know-how could serve to train specialists in a short time. Its mine-clearance units applied United Nations standards and were available for participation in United Nations missions in various countries. Ukraine had ratified the Ottawa Convention on Landmines.

37. **Ms. Nuñez Mordoche** (Cuba) said that her country had steadfastly shared the international community's humanitarian concerns over the consequences of the irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines and of the failure to ensure effective post-conflict demining. It maintained that a country should bear full responsibility for the use of landmines in cases of national security, and it had consistently supported the resolution on mine action assistance. Member States should overcome the disagreements expressed during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly concerning the main goal of mine action assistance and the evaluation of United Nations mine action policy. The term "mine action" should only designate activities undertaken to solve problems

resulting from the indiscriminate use of landmines. The proposed resolution should therefore focus on humanitarian aspects, particularly international assistance, and not address any legal or security issues related to landmines. Member States should be responsible for implementing United Nations mine action policies, in accordance with the Charter and taking into account the Organization's programme and budget. Countries should be held legally and politically accountable for laying mines in the territory of other States.

38. The mobilization of international financial and technical assistance was an essential component of mine action. Demining should not divert attention from other important activities in that field. The promotion of such activities, for instance, through the provision of assistance to countries, upon request, for the implementation of rehabilitation and national capacity-building programmes, should be part of a comprehensive United Nations development strategy.

39. **Mr. Lake** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate country Croatia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union fully shared the United Nations vision for a world free of the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war. International mine action contributed towards global peace and stability and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It therefore remained a political priority for the European Union, which had allocated €384 million (US$ 340 million) for such activities since 2003. It had also included mine action in its multiannual programme and strategy for the period 2005 to 2007. The European Union strongly supported the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, to which 147 States had acceded; its universalization was essential. States Parties had been urged at the 2005 World Summit to fulfil their obligations under the Convention, in keeping with the First Review Conference in 2004 and the Nairobi Action Plan for the period 2005 to 2009. The sixth meeting of States Parties in Croatia later in 2005 should assess progress made towards the attainment of the Convention's humanitarian goals. Moreover, the provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, in particular those of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war, should be strengthened. States Parties should ratify and implement that Protocol as soon as possible and report on their progress in ratification.

40. The European Union provided social, economic and medical assistance to countries affected by landmines. In view of the wide variety of stakeholders engaged in mine action activities, coordination was necessary in order to avoid duplication and to ensure effective utilization of resources, building on national capacity where possible. Mechanisms such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action and the Steering Committee on Mine Action could help to build consensus around policy, strategy and operational issues. The engagement and flexibility of all delegations should make it possible to adopt the proposed draft resolution by consensus, since it demonstrated the international community's collective resolve to address the challenge of landmines.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.